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Letter dated 25 January 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 2 December 1999 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations (A/54/655-S/1999/1220).

This ritualistic letter merely obscures the fact that the Government of Lebanon is directly responsible for the volatile situation along its southern border and that it continues to reject available means for resolving the conflict.

Indeed, even as substantial strides are being made towards reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, Lebanon continues to openly support a terror campaign against a neighbouring State, while endorsing opposition to any peace agreement. In addition, Lebanon refuses to respond to Israel's repeated invitations to negotiate a solution that would restore peace and security along our common border, particularly the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978. Over the nearly two years since this invitation was extended, Lebanon has opted instead to allow the conflict to continue and the human toll to rise. The perpetuation of the conflict, therefore, is of Lebanon's own making.

I wish to recall the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, providing that sovereignty carries a responsibility not to allow terrorist acts to be organized and prepared on one's territory or launched from it.

The policies of Lebanon stand in direct conflict with this provision. Organizations operating on Lebanese soil openly practise terrorist operations against neighbouring Israel, and Lebanon takes no action to prevent or restrain

them. These organizations have made clear that their opposition is to the very existence of the State of Israel. As Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah, the Secretary-General of the Lebanon-based Hizballah militia, recently stated: "There is no solution to the conflict in this region except with the disappearance of Israel" (Washington Post, 1 January 2000). Similarly, the leader of Islamic Jihad in Lebanon called that territory "an open front for the liberation of Palestine", adding that "there is broad scope for resistance that serves the project of Islamic Jihad which seeks to destroy the Zionist entity" (Al Hayyat, 30 October 1999).

These positions demolish the claims by Lebanese officials that such groups are simply engaged in "resistance" (A/53/878-S/1999/333), and make clear that, in fact, their "resistance" is to the existence of Israel altogether. Yet, in contradiction to resolution 2625 (XXV) and against international norms. Lebanon does nothing to dismantle or disarm these organizations. On the contrary - Lebanon's Prime Minister embraces their "jihad" and so-called "resistance" (Voice of Lebanon, 16 February 1999). While Israel and others are seeking to achieve a negotiated resolution to the conflict, Lebanon openly backs the opponents of peace: it has adopted Hizballah, renaming it the "Lebanese national resistance" (A/53/878-S/1999/333), whose position is that "peace settlements will not change reality, which is that Israel is the enemy and that it will never be a neighbor or a nation" (Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah, Washington Post, 1 January 2000).

Lebanon's endorsement of this stance conforms with its continued rejection of a negotiated solution to the conflict. It should be recalled that resolution 425 (1978) calls not only for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Government of Lebanon in the area. The declared willingness of the Government of Lebanon to host an elaborate terrorist infrastructure, to permit its regular reinforcement and to endorse its operations against a neighbouring country is totally incompatible with the last two provisions of the resolution.

Coupled with its refusal to negotiate a peaceful solution, the policies of Lebanon leave Israel with no alternative but to exercise its sovereign right of self-defence in accordance with international law. Nevertheless, Israel once again calls upon the Government of Lebanon to begin negotiating a solution with the aim of restoring peace and security along our common border.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 160, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yehuda LANCRY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative